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INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 1767
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0062
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC 0044
RHHJJAA/JICPAC PEARL HARBOR HI 0014
RUCGEVC/JOINT STAFF WASHDC 0027
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 0071
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0516

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHENYANG 000184

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/CM, EAP/K, PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PINR](#) [KWMN](#) [KN](#) [KS](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: AIDING NORTH KOREAN PATIENTS (AND BORDER-CROSSERS): ONGOING HEADACHES FOR DANDONG-BASED NGO

REF: A. (A) 2005 SHENYANG 304 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. (B) 2006 SHENYANG

[1](#)C. 1203

Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL STEPHEN B. WICKMAN.
REASONS: 1.4(b)/(d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: A Dandong-based, Korean-American NGO focused on North Korea continues to ship medical aid into the DPRK, but headaches abound as the group seeks to refine its aid strategy. In a modest hospital near the PRC-DPRK border, the group also discreetly tends to North Korean border-crossers. According to one representative, recent arrivals are down compared to earlier periods. Recent conversations with North Koreans indicate that the quality of medical care and medical education remains shockingly poor in Sinuiju, one of the DPRK's largest cities. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff in Dandong on September 11 met with Dr. Lee Kun-Wook, a representative of the Dandong Christian Medical and Welfare Mission (CMWM) Hospital, a private medical facility near the PRC-DPRK border run by the U.S.-based Spiritual Awakening Mission (SAM), a DPRK-focused Christian humanitarian NGO that has been operating out of northeast China since 2000. The hospital, not far from Sinuiju, functions as SAM's launching pad into North Korea and, occasionally, as a refuge for North Korean border-crossers (see ref A for background). Lee, a Korean-Paraguayan pediatric surgeon trained in the West, detailed the group's recent experience in attempting to aid North Korea, as well as some DPRK nationals in China.

MEDICAL AID TO NORTH KOREA: ONGOING HEADACHES

[1](#)3. (C) SAM continues to regularly ship humanitarian medical aid into the DPRK, but headaches abound and Pyongyang remains wary of the Korean-American Christian group, according to Lee. Most recently, SAM donated, at official North Korean request in response to the summer's flooding, 10,000 medical kits containing basic medicines and medical supplies. SAM ramped up quickly on short notice: within three days, it procured supplies from the local market and flew in 30 volunteers from Seoul who assembled the kits under the watch of Chinese customs agents. Lee estimated

that two kits might last each of the country's estimated 5000 clinics at least a month or two. The DPRK, he hoped, would permit a follow-up shipment of refills within six months.

14. (C) SAM has been frustrated by the diversion of its humanitarian aid by DPRK authorities in recent years, Lee explained. In one instance, SAM donated and shipped into the North a truckload of a particular medicine, only to later learn that Pyongyang had sold it in Russia and China, pocketing the proceeds. In another case, SAM donated a shipment of winter clothes, which it later discovered was sold by the DPRK recipients back in Dandong, where the clothes had originally been purchased. Against this backdrop, SAM, like other DPRK-focused NGOs operating out of northeast China (see ref B) and beyond, is seeking ways to refine its aid strategy to minimize the potential for diversion. SAM's current strategy is to reduce the scale of its donations. SAM sends small medical kits that would be bothersome to unpack and separate in order to divert. Lee readily conceded that SAM cannot confirm that this strategy is effective.

NORTH KOREAN BORDER-CROSSERS

15. (C) The CMWM Hospital continues to tend discreetly to North Korean border-crossers, though arrivals are fewer compared to earlier periods. Some are "walk-ins" who learn of the hospital's existence by word of mouth, while others are brought in by friendly third parties based in downtown Dandong, Lee explained. The hospital typically offers the North Koreans medical care either entirely "off the books"

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or by entering a false Chinese name on the patient registration. The hospital also provides food and temporary shelter. But in the past few months, "not many" had arrived; Lee ascribed this, in part, to the 20-30 kilometer trek required to reach the hospital from downtown Dandong.

THE STATE OF THE MEDICAL FIELD AND HEALTH CARE IN SINUIJU

16. (C) At the CMWM Hospital, Dr. Lee recently encountered a North Korean medical student from Sinuiju, one of North Korea's largest cities, where medical care and the state of the medical field remain poor, according to the student. Asked about medical school in Sinuiju, the student explained to Lee that he and his classmates had no textbooks; in all classes, they simply took notes from lectures by professors, many of whom cannot read English (and are thus unable to keep abreast of medical developments published in English-language periodicals). Medical students theoretically know their subjects, but have virtually no opportunity for practical training. Lee showed the student a digital thermometer, but he had never seen one, nor most of the basic modern medical machines (e.g., for blood tests) at the CMWM Hospital. The student claimed that his medical school had no stethoscopes; wealthier citizens in Sinuiju, he said, often purchased their own for use by doctors when/if they became ill. Medical care and education is far better in Pyongyang, the student claimed--a point Lee said he had heard from other border-crossers who had come to the CMWM Hospital. Lee said he gave the student a number of old English-language medical books he had on hand, as well as some Chinese-made stethoscopes. Before returning to Sinuiju, the student planned to send them back across the border via a Chinese smuggler.

WICKMAN